

Tribal Planning Grant Proposal

Draft

Problem Statement

At times tribes, state agencies, local agencies experience conflicts in the planning, programming and construction of transportation projects on or near tribal lands. In many cases, the conflicts can be alleviated if communication, coordination and cooperation were improved at the planning stage.

Needs/Background

ISTEA and TEA-21 have provided the Washington State Department Of Transportation (WSDOT) with the opportunity to create partnerships by allocating funding to help support cities, counties, transit agencies, and ports with participating in its transportation planning process. The partnerships are created at the Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs) and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). This coordination has resulted in better transportation decisions and wiser investments for these entities.

The Indian Reservation Roads program, managed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, has not been funded as well. Indian tribal governments deserve an adequate level of assistance in order to coordinate and consult with all governments. Nearly all state Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs) and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) include tribal lands within their planning areas. The RTPOs and MPOs recognize that the activities within the tribal areas are an integral part of and have an impact on state, regional and local transportation systems. WSDOT recognizes this as a statewide issue of social, economic and environmental importance to all transportation interests and stakeholders.

The state's requirements for statewide planning in regard to Indian tribal governments are identified in Title 23, §135, Sections (d), (e), and (f) and include:

- Consider the concerns of Indian tribal governments and Federal land management agencies that have jurisdiction over land within the boundaries of the State;
- Coordination of transportation plans, programs, and planning activities with related planning activities being carried out outside of metropolitan planning areas;
- With respect to each area of the State under the jurisdiction of an Indian tribal government, the long-range transportation plan shall be developed in consultation with the tribal government and the Secretary of the Interior.

Much of the consultation and coordination with Tribal governments is accomplished at the RTPO and MPO forums. However, since most tribal governments do not have the financial and staff resources to participate at these forums a gap in coordination is created.

Opportunities

Increased funding for tribal planning efforts in the State would maximize transportation funds coming into the state by:

- Providing for coordinated transportation plans;
- Creating early, continuous and meaningful dialogue between all parties on transportation facilities and services, and;
- Creating positive relationships whereby partnering can occur.

Sources of Support

The Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) members of the MPO/RTPO/WSDOT Coordinating Committee, at its September 9, 1999 meeting, voted unanimously to urge the state Transportation Commission and Department of Transportation to provide funding and staff support for tribal transportation planning. Unfortunately the funding climate in the State has not kept up with the needs and there is a funding short-fall. Therefore other options such as a pilot project or discretionary grant is more feasible. Such a pilot project would have these elements:

- Funding for each Tribal government to hire one transportation professional to develop a transportation plan and to participate in the MPO/RTPO planning process;
- Funding would be matched by the IRR program or each Tribal government;
- Performance measures established to monitor the success of the program; and
- Secured funding for the life of T-3 (\$50,000/Tribe per year);
- The Tribal Transportation Grant would be administered by the Washington State Department of Transportation.